

State Secretary, Aides Deny Laxity In Office

SACRAMENTO (UPI) — Secretary of State Frank M. Jordan and two of his aides were on record Friday as denying almost all the charges made in a sizzling Senate investigating committee report on debt collectors.

The Senate committee report accused Jordan and Harry Edwards, chief of the Division of Collection Agencies, and Stanley G. Windrem, assistant chief of law administration of collection agencies, debt liquidators and private detectives. "The whole damn report is slanted," Jordan told newsmen at a press conference in his office. Flanked by Edwards and Windrem, Jordan gave reporters a written statement which he said at first said was his own. It said the committee's charges "remain unsubstantiated" and that the administration of state laws regulating collection agencies is a "model one" admired by other states.

Under questioning by reporters, it developed the statement was written in part by Robert Jones, a registered lobbyist and chairman of the Legislative Committee of the California Association of Collectors, Inc. Jordan eventually denied that it was his statement but he did say that the document in his opinion "is factual."

Edwards did most of the talking for the trio. He said the Senate report contained "misstatements" and in some respects was false.

The report accused him of accepting gifts from collection agencies including a wrist watch, television set, power saw, and that collectors paid some medical bills for him.

"I never accepted a single solitary direct gift from any licensee in this state," Edwards said.

But he admitted receiving the watch and television set from a state convention of collectors. As for the medical bills, Edwards said that he underwent an operation in San Diego, that his health insurance paid part of the cost.

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and that he returned to the hospital to pay the rest of the bill. "But someone who called himself Edwards had come in and paid the bill," the state official said. "I tried to find out who did it but I never could."

Edwards, chief of the state division since 1932, said there never had been reported to him "any case involving brutality, extortion or any other violence" although the Senate committee report contained charges that debt collectors, private detectives and auto repossessioners used strong-arm methods to collect.

After the news conference, Jordan's office released a lengthy telegram signed by Edward O. Letson, president of the Collectors' Association.

Letson did not deny that there were unethical and unscrupulous persons in the industry but he said the Senate committee report showed "only 2 per cent of our industry is involved."

Letson suggested the state should make all collectors join his organization as a condition for getting a state license. "That way we can enforce codes of ethics and practices, just as the Bar Association does, and eliminate the unscrupulous and shady operators from the collection field," he said.

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